

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

April 19, 2013

Jobs for 4-18-2013 (KLRT, Fox 16, Little Rock)

(The following announcement was read during 9 p.m. news broadcast & posted on station's website)

Job: Teacher Job Fair

Employer: Teacher

Details: The Arkansas Department of Education is hosting the 2013 Educators Career Fair Saturday, April 20 from 9-noon at the Metroplex Event Center off I-430 at Colonel Glenn Road. Learn how to obtain your teaching license, renew or add to your current license and seek current job openings. Representatives from the Department of Education, school districts and state colleges and universities will be present. Apply at: Registration is free. Just visit teacharkansas.org

TASD installing new video surveillance in buses (KTAL, Channel 6, Shreveport, LA)

Video available at http://arklatexhomepage.com/fulltext?nxd_id=319822

In an effort to improve child safety on buses, one local school district is updating their video surveillance system.

More than 30 Texarkana, Arkansas school district buses are each equipped with four video cameras.

Three are on the inside, and one is connected to the outside of the bus.

But because they're outdated, the Board voted Tuesday to buy 14 additional systems.

TASD official, Frank Coleman, says it's necessary so they can know what's going on at all times.

"They just give us the added eyes and ears that are helpful in trying to resolve problems."

The new cameras will provide better video and audio quality.

Only half of the buses will be equipped with the new technology and the rest will be installed at a later time.

The total cost of the project is almost \$67,000.

UAPB conference pushes to improve educational access (Pine Bluff Commercial)

A cross-section of educators from throughout Arkansas met on the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff campus Thursday to continue a two-decade tradition of increasing access to education by sharing information on proven techniques for success.

The Twentieth Annual Mary E. Benjamin Conference on Educational Access: Models that Work in Arkansas was presided over by its namesake, the UAPB vice chancellor for academic affairs.

"We created this conference because we were very much concerned about remediation rates for students coming into the university and wanted to find a way to address it," Benjamin said. "We needed to reach out to the pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade educators and to the community at large. There is no one silver bullet that will solve the problem but through this conference we are able to evaluate different methods that have produced successful outcomes.

"We want students to be both knowledgeable and to be ready for work when they graduate," Benjamin said. "This yearly conference recognizes the importance of all of these leaders coming together and pursuing a common goal."

Models that work

In its search for successful education models the conference organizers assembled a panel of three representing public charter schools, home schooling and public schools.

Public charter schools

Scott Shirey, executive director of the KIPP Delta Public Schools in Helena-West Helena, outlined what that public charter school has done to bring educational opportunity to children there and in Blytheville.

"We are a public charter school, which means that we don't charge our students to attend and enrollment is open to any who want to come as long as we have the room," Shirey said.

Shirey said KIPP stands for Knowledge Is Power Program and that it was started in 1994 in Houston and 1995 in The Bronx, N.Y.

"We had students from the worst neighborhoods in Houston and the roughest parts of The Bronx who were getting into top college programs," Shirey said.

Shirey laid out the five pillars that guide the school's philosophy.

"First, we have high expectations and believe that all have a right to achieve," Shirey said. "Part of that means our students have two hours of homework every night. Second, we emphasize choice and commitment. If you have access to wealth and money you have a choice on where your children go to

school. If you do not have the economic means you don't have a choice. So our schools provide that choice."

Shirey said the third pillar is giving students more time to do what they need to do; the fourth pillar is the power to lead; and the fifth is focus on results.

"We are driven by one mission and that is getting these students to college," Shirey said. "To show you how rural the area is that these students come from we drive 1,000 miles each day transporting students to and from school. Our yearly travel budget is \$1 million. Some kids get on the bus before 6 a.m. and travel one hour each way because they want to be part of our program. We have 88 percent of our students on free and reduced lunch and 96 percent of them are African-American."

Shirey said that extracurricular activities are an important part of the educational process.

"We have a successful basketball program as well as choir, drama and dance," Shirey said. "We realize that these activities are an important part of a child's education."

Shirey said that in 2009 the 11th-graders of KIPP Collegiate High School in Helena-West Helena had the second-highest literacy scores in the state and that the average ACT scores of the school's students are 22.7 while the state average is 21.

"Another important statistic is that 87 percent of our graduated alumni from 2010, 2011 and 2012 are either enrolled in college or enlisted in the military," Shirey said.

Home schooling

Melissa Savary is the director of The Education Alliance in Little Rock, which oversees home-schoolers in Arkansas.

"We believe parents have the right to choose how their children are educated," Savary said. "After all, who knows children better than their parents? There are 17,000 home-schooled children in Arkansas and 2 million nationally."

Savary said the state does require that home-schooled children in the third through ninth grades be given the same standardized tests that other students in the state must take.

"Every time there is another school shooting we see a rise in the number of home schooled children," Savary said.

Public schools

Tracy Tucker is the director of curriculum and instruction in the Division of Learning Services at the Arkansas Department of Education in Little Rock.

Tucker focused on the state's relationship with the Literacy Design Collaborative, which allows for the infusion of writing into other subjects.

"The first goal of the LDC is to engage students in analyzing and responding to texts that they read," Tucker said. "Second, we ensure that all assignments are aligned with the Common Core Standards. Third, we help teachers to personalize the learning experience to make it real to the students. Fourth, we ensure that students are college- and career-ready."

Tucker said teachers are seeing higher levels of student engagement after participating in the program.

"In many instances students are leading the discussions," Tucker said.

"It's about our students being able to communicate with something besides their thumbs," Tucker said. "We want them to be able to debate and argue a point."

Chancellor Johnson

UAPB Chancellor Calvin Johnson provided a summation that tied the various themes together.

"The education of all children is the responsibility of the state of Arkansas," Johnson said. "Most of us are products of public schools but we have come to appreciate other educational options. We cannot argue with the success of the KIPP School. We should have high expectations for our children wherever they are taught. The state requires home-school students to meet standards. The public schools in Arkansas are doing better than they ever have before."

Johnson said colleges and universities must work with pre-K through 12th-grade schools to ease the transition to college.

"For too long we have prepared our students to graduate, not to continue with their education," Johnson said. "If we change the way we see things, the things we see will change."

Monticello School board hires new MES principal (Advance-Monticellonian, Monticello)

The Monticello School Board hired a new principal for the elementary school Tuesday night during its regular scheduled board meeting.

Cindy Hilburn, who is currently employed by the district as an assistant principal and pre-k director, was hired to succeed Tish Thomas, who announced her retirement in February.

Thomas will remain in her role as the MES principal until June 30.

Hilburn is a 31-year education veteran. She and her family moved to Monticello in 1997, and since that time, Hilburn has been employed in the Monticello School District with the exception of four years when she worked for the educational cooperative.

The board also voted to give Gaynell Jamison the duties of pre-k director in addition to her duties as Reading Recovery director for MES.

In other business, the board voted to uphold the expulsion of two high school students through the end of this year. One of the two students appealed the decision to the board and a closed hearing was held.

All information regarding the hearing and cause for expulsion are confidential in closed hearings.

When the board went back into regular session, all members voted to uphold the recommendation to expell the student.

Board president Hani Hasham told the boy and his mother that the district has no other option but to expell students who can't obey the rules in the boot camp setting.

"I can respect that you are asking for a second chance but boot camp was your second chance," Hasham said.

Hasham added that he sincerely hopes both students take the remainder of this year and the summer to get their priorities in line before returning to school.

The board took a separate vote to uphold the other student's expulsion since he did not appeal.

Superintendent Bobby Harper announced that the District has been awarded a \$3,000 grant from Clearwater. He said the grant will be used for special classroom projects.

Teachers can apply for the grants. They will be awarded \$300 for a single classroom or \$1,000 for a whole grade level.

"We'd like to have more organizations step up like this," Harper said.

"Last year Ryburn and Toyota donated money. We approved nearly every proposal submitted last year. We appreciate Clearwater for their contribution to our district."

Harper also informed the board that the District will be re-evaluated for accreditation next year. AdvancED, an education accreditation firm, will visit the District February 23-26, 2014.

"The last time we went through this it was four years ago," Harper explained.

"At that time, each school received its own accreditation. Now the accreditation is down district-wide."

Harper said the firm will come in to see what the school is doing, check out the books, and talk to parents, teachers, and students.

"Basically they are making sure we are doing what we should to be doing," Harper said.

He said he expects the inspectors will have some recommendations for the District, and that they will need to have a called board meeting at the end of the evaluation on Feb. 26 to hear the recommendations as a board.

"I'll bring you more information on their visit as it becomes available," Harper said.

The board voted to approve various policies suggested by the Arkansas School Board Association with the exception of a policy allowing home schooled students to participate in extracurricular activities at the school.

That particular policy was tabled to see if pending legislation is passed mandating that schools allow home schooled students to participate in extracurricular activities such as band and athletics.

None of the board members like the idea of allowing a non-student to participate in extracurricular activities because the school won't have any authority to discipline the students should they need it.

The board voted to move the next school board meeting from May 21 to May 14 due to a conflict with one of the board members.

The meeting will be held at 5:30 p.m. at the central office.

The riddle of the old high school: Architect presents options for vacated campus (Lovely County Citizen, Eureka Springs)

Opportunity. That's what lies on the corner of Highway 62 and Midway Street, according to architect Ed Levy.

The key to unlocking that opportunity is answering a question: Who is going to own it?

Last week, a team from Cromwell Architects led by Levy held public input meetings on what to do with the old high school campus, vacated when the new high school opened in January. On Thursday, Levy and John Mixon reported that people had no problem verbalizing their wishes: a recreational facility that would serve local residents and families with children.

"'Indoor swimming pool' were the words we heard most often from groups of people and individuals," Levy said.

The catch to any plan, school board chairman Al Larson pointed out, is that the district is not in the business of running community centers and cannot use funds to create one. At Larson's suggestion, Levy wrote down "Who is going to own the property?" to the list of "going forward" steps for the property, valued at \$1 million.

"It's not the school district that is going to be in charge of this," Larson said. "Some entity has got to take it over."

Levy, who is volunteering his firm's services, also presented ideas for the use of the three buildings on the property, two of which are in good shape: the gymnasium and the former cafeteria. His recommendation: start looking into requirements for housing a Boys and Girls Club in the gymnasium.

"You could have a fitness center, put in a stage, use the shop space in the basement as a skills center, teach arts and craft classes and have a computer center in the East Lab," he said.

The former cafeteria building could be leased as-is for art, cooking or craft classes, generating income right away, Levy said. That the property is at the intersection of Highway 62 and the historic business loop makes it one of the "gateways" to the city for visitors, Levy said.

"You have a real opportunity to make a welcome statement at the corner," he said.

Levy also recommended that the school board fix the leaky roof of the main classroom building to stabilize the building, and presented six options for it, along with pros and cons. The situation: the classroom building is one of 50 "maximum light" buildings in the country-- its exterior walls are reinforced concrete topped with ridged glass blocks that have been painted over. There's no good way to add insulation to glass and concrete walls, Levy said. Option 1 is to keep the building as is, and would mean buying a new HVAC system, but it will never be economical to heat or cool. Another issue: interior walls are load-bearing, so cannot be taken out without the roof falling in, Levy said, which negates the idea of reconfiguring the space for other uses.

Option 2 is to demolish the addition to the building, returning it to its originally C-shaped, which would create a small courtyard, and restore the rest of the building as in Option 1. The hazardous materials in the building will have to be dealt with no matter what option is chosen, he said.

Overlying any plan for the site is the fact that the building is in the historic district, which means the Historic District Commission has the power to nix any change or new construction. Jack Murphy, an interested resident who attended the meeting, said that the city, the county and business owners should take the role of sparking the economic development of the site, with the first step to find out what the Historic District Commission will not allow so as not to waste time promoting the site to developers.

"Glenna Booth told us we could build a new building inside the walls," Levy said. "We drew that up and said, 'Aha.'"

The "aha" moment was Option 3: scoop out the inside of existing building, leaving the concrete and glass block walls, remove the paint from the glass blocks and add a steel roof overhang to create a large, light-filled enclosed courtyard that could be used for a farmer's market, Christmas market and other community event.

"This becomes a space you don't have here yet," Levy said.

This option also eliminates the need for a new HVAC, has no utility costs except for lighting, and is virtually maintenance free.

"Demolition is really cheap," Levy said. "This is probably the cheapest option up here."

Option 4 would be to turn the building into an indoor swimming pool, which would require extensive construction and be the most expensive to operate and maintain, he said. It would also require finding someone who wanted to operate an indoor pool/water park, Levy said.

Option 5 and 6 called for tearing the building down and replacing it with something smaller, or building a dynamic architectural showplace incorporating art that Levy calls the "Mod Nouveau" option.

An outdoor swimming pool on the sloped part of the campus property, with a water slide and steps down to it, is a component that could be incorporated into all the other options. An open-air market in the parking lot is another possible component.

"This is your one chance in 100 years to decide what to do with that site," Levy said.

Jess Green, who lives next to the campus, said that he and the other neighbors are primarily interested in keeping the streets open, and that he would have no objection to any idea that the architect thought was practical.

Levy is volunteering his services through Breakthrough Solutions, a University of Arkansas program that helps communities move forward by solving a problem that is key to the community's future. Diagrams of the six options for the classroom building and the property will be posted on the school district's website. It's up to residents to discuss them and choose one, he said, then refine it, develop a fund-raising strategy, raise the money and build it.

The school district also has choices to make, Levy said: whether to go ahead and work with a commercial real estate agent and sell the property or could look for an entity or public-private partnership to develop the property to meet a community need. The district could also order a BER, building engineering report, to determine the value and get a detailed assessment of all the needs, Levy said, or it could let the buildings sit and lose value.

"It's not recommended," Levy said.

Senate approves tax cut bills totaling \$120 million by 2016 (Log Cabin Democrat)

LITTLE ROCK — The Arkansas Senate on Thursday approved 11 separate tax cut proposals which would total about \$120 million by the 2015-16 fiscal year.

The tax cuts, which would be phased in over a three-year period to take advantage of savings anticipated from health care expansion, would amount to about \$10 million beginning July 1 and \$82 million in fiscal year 2015.

The centerpiece of the tax cut proposals is House Bill 1585 by Rep. Charlie Collins, R-Fayetteville, which would reduce the state income tax in all tax brackets by one-tenth of 1 percent. Under the bill,

amended from its original version passed by the House earlier this week, the lowest tax bracket would be the only one to receive the tax break beginning in the fiscal year that begins July 1.

HB 1585, which was amended, passed 28-5 and goes back to the House for concurrence on a Senate amendment.

During debate on the Senate floor, Sen. Bruce Maloch, D-Magnolia, said he preferred the original proposal because it reduced the state income tax for lower and middle income brackets, but not for high income earners.

Maloch said he was proud that the state has been able to cut taxes in each of the previous three regular legislative sessions — 2007, 2009 and 2011 — and that tax cuts appear on track in the current session.

“We did it ... while still maintaining a balanced budget, and of course we did it during a very difficult economy,” he said.

Sen. Jake Files, R-Fort Smith, chairman of the Senate Revenue and Taxation Committee, said Collins amended the bill so the income tax cut would apply to all taxpayers.

The tax cut would reduce state general revenues by about \$2.4 million in the next fiscal year, \$32.9 in 2015 and \$55.7 million in 2016.

Originally, HB 1585 would have cut the state’s 7 percent income tax to 6.875 percent on taxable income of \$44,000 and above. It also would have cut the top tax bracket of 7 percent to 6 7/8 percent.

In a 32-0 vote, the Senate also approved HB 1966 by House Speaker Davy Carter, R-Cabot, which would raise the capital gains tax threshold to 50 percent of gains. The bill includes an exemption for capital gains that exceed \$10 million.

The tax cut would reduce state revenues by about \$7 million annually, according to the state Department of Finance and Administration.

The Senate passed identical House and Senate bills — SB 135 and HB 1234 — that would reduce the sales tax on groceries from 1.5 percent to 0.125 percent. However, that tax cut would not take effect until the state pays off certain bond obligations or the long-time desegregation lawsuit involving three Pulaski County school districts is resolved.

Both bills passed 34-0. HB 1234 goes to the governor, while SB 135 goes to the House.

While most of the tax proposals generated little discussion on the Senate floor, Sen. Bart Hester, R-Cave Springs, said during the Revenue and Taxation Committee that he was disappointed that more tax cuts won’t take effect in the upcoming fiscal year, which begins July 1, while the Legislature has approved \$125 million for the Big River Steel project in Mississippi County and there is more than \$100 million in state surplus available for capital projects in lawmakers’ home districts.

Files told reporters after the committee meeting he is optimistic that savings the state will see from health care expansion — initially paid for entirely by the federal government — as well as expected growth in the economy will allow the state to absorb the tax cuts without having to cut the budget.

Gov. Mike Beebe told reporters later he was comfortable with the tax cuts for the first two years, but worried about \$120 million in 2016.

“We’ve got a mechanism in place with the (health care) expansion, with the private option, and the savings that are generated across the board in various agencies in that regard, to be able to accommodate 100 million,” he said.

Whether the state can afford \$120 million in 2016 “depends on (revenue) growth,” he said.

“If they are believing they’re going to be protected from normal growth and revenue in just normal expansion of economic activity in the state, they may be alright. But, I wouldn’t do it that way,” he said.

“As long as they understand they’ve got an opportunity to fix that in the regular 2015 session, if their assumptions are wrong, then they’ll have to do that,” he said. “I would be more conservative going in the future, but obviously they believe there will be growth and just normal expansion in business opportunities and revenue.”

Other tax cut proposals endorsed by the Senate Thursday, include:

- SB 11 by Sen. Gary Stubblefield, R-Branch, a sales tax exemption on supplies for farm machinery, with an annual revenue impact of about \$750,000. The bill passed 34-0 and goes to the House.
- SB 298 by Sen. Jonathan Dismang, R-Searcy, a sales tax break on utilities for grain drying and storage facilities, with an annual revenue impact of about \$4 million. The bill passed 34-0 and goes to the House.
- SB 299 by Sen. Larry Teague, D-Nashville, a sales tax break for timber harvesting equipment, with annual impact of about \$750,000. The bill passed 34-0 and goes to the House.
- SB 334 by Files, a sales tax break for replacement parts and machinery for manufacturers, with an annual impact of about \$4.6 million. The bill passed 34-0 and goes to the House.
- SB 463 by Sen. Jim Hendren, Gravette, an income tax break for active duty military, with an annual impact of about \$7.2 million. The bill passed 34-0 and goes to the House.
- SB 791 by Sen. Bill Sample, R-Hot Springs, a utility sales tax reduction for manufacturers, with an annual impact of about \$18 million. The bill passed 30-1 and goes to the House.
- SB 853 by Teague, a sales tax break for dental appliances, with an annual impact of about \$1.4 million. The bill passed 34-0 and goes to the House.

- HB 1039 by Rep. Jeff Wardlaw, D-Warren, a utility sales tax break for agricultural structures, aquaculture and horticulture structures, with an annual impact of about \$4 million. The bill passed 34-0 and goes to the House for concurrence on a Senate amendment.
- HB 1399 by Rep. Joe Farrer, R-Austin, which would allow volunteer firefighters to deduct from their state income taxes the cost of equipment they are required to buy and any losses to personal property that they experience while fighting fires, up to \$1,000 per year. The tax cut has an annual impact of about \$48,000 annually. The bill passed 34-0 and goes to the House for concurrence on a Senate amendment.

The tax cuts that take effect Jan. 1, 2014, include HB 1039, HB 1585, HB 1966, SB 11, and SB 463. The others take effect Jan. 1, 2015.

The 13th grade (Editorial by Dana Kelley, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Spring is finally in the air, and not far behind is the annual festival of high school graduation.

The Arkansas education system will launch roughly 30,000 freshly diploma-ed seniors into the summer, of which roughly 60 percent will grace college and university campuses in the coming fall as freshmen.

Unfortunately, the recently released ACT college-readiness report predicts that only one out of five of those Arkansas grads is really ready for the rigor of college coursework.

The data paint a troublesome picture, in which political efforts to push more high school seniors to college-ready or not-collide with the reality that high school simply isn't preparing most kids for the 13th grade.

That linguistic slight against the first year of collegiate study is no accident.

For a great number of students across the state and nation, college is simply another grade after another summer vacation, only at a new campus with new teachers and classrooms.

Going on to college is as often a product of inertia and tradition as anything else. And yet it is an expensive exercise in futility if students don't have the discipline, drive and dedication to succeed at the college level.

There's a stench of stagnation regarding college readiness, too, caused partly by some bad math regarding investment and return on school/student dollars.

Two and two simply don't make four when we consider that Arkansas education expenditures have soared since 1997, but average ACT scores haven't budged a point.

Per-pupil spending has more than doubled, from just over \$4,000 to more than \$10,000; average teacher salaries, too, from \$21,000 to \$43,500. And who knows how much of capital expenditures have

been sunk into infrastructure over that same period? One needn't look hard to see new school buildings under construction every year.

And yet, the average ACT score for Arkansas high school seniors in 1997 was 20.3-exactly the same as it was in 2012.

The average has fluctuated slightly through the years, but it's generally been right around 20, with the highest average score 20.6, and the lowest 19.7.

The point is, despite significantly increasing the amount of resources dedicated to producing high school seniors, we haven't seen any correlating increase in college readiness as measured by the ACT test.

That also helps explain why Arkansas expenditures on college remediation doubled from 1997 to 2007.

Maybe what's going on here is the proverbial square-peg and round-hole conundrum. Maybe it doesn't matter how much money we spent on high school education, but that 18-year-olds and college just aren't a good match in general.

Putting aside the statistical evidence like high college dropout rates, there are other indicators that college might be a much more fruitful and fulfilling experience if high school seniors waited a few years to attend.

Too many 18-year-olds simply aren't sure what they want to do or be, and understandably so. They haven't tried much. College is an expensive place to find one's self; far better to try a couple of jobs for hands-on experience and pocket a few paychecks for the trial-and-error lessons learned.

The best idea might be to require a break between high school and college. Doing something else for a couple of years, or longer, can help teenagers mature in a context of instructive responsibility.

Structured options could include a robust apprentice program and some form of service (military, civic or humanitarian in nature) in which a high school graduate commits to at least two years and receives basic training in life: getting up early, working under a schedule, owning projects and mistakes, taking care of personal affairs and effects, answering to authority, and so forth.

Instead of paying for that real-life education, kids would get paid. Then, after completing their service duty, they could attend college where they would likely be a better student for their experiences.

Recovering some of the staggering costs lost on first-year college dropouts would likely more than pay the price of creating a cooperative state service program that could work in conjunction with the armed services, organizations like the Peace Corps, and mission outreach programs, both secular and religious.

Admission to colleges could require a completed service certificate or apprentice agreement so that aspiring high school graduates would know that college wasn't just the "next grade," but a new endeavor that required preparation and maturation on their part.

In fact, college should be approached much more like a job than high school is. Working as an apprentice or as a soldier or a service member would only hone a student's skills and attitude in that regard.

Reasonable exemptions from sitting out two years before attending college could include athletes receiving scholarships, and students scoring very high (33 or 34 and above) on the ACT.

In both those high-performing instances, there's already a demonstration of commitment to discipline and mastery that is predictive of collegiate success.

With lottery scholarships dwindling, and remediation rates (and costs) high, we need value innovation for higher education. A waiting period between high school and college might work wonders.

Educator nominated for award (Log Cabin Democrat)

A local resident has been nominated as an outstanding educator, according to a news release.

Penny Chen, resident of Conway, was nominated for this year's Vicki Saviers Educator of the Year Award by the eStem Public Charter Schools. She is an educator at eStem High.

Chen is married to Donald Jacob Curran.

The award presentation will occur at the STEM Soiree on May 11.

eStem Public Charter Schools, Inc., is a nonprofit charter school management organization in Arkansas, according to the group's website.

The group has eStem Elementary Public Charter School, eStem Middle Public Charter School, and eStem High Public Charter School in downtown Little Rock. Any school-aged child in Arkansas is eligible to attend the schools tuition free, according to the website.

Student arrested with gun in school in North Little Rock (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Police acting on a tip arrested an 18-year-old student at North Little Rock High School-West Campus after pulling him from class and finding a handgun concealed in his pants, according to a report.

The North Little Rock Police Department says Johnny Ray Felder Jr. was arrested Thursday after police received an anonymous tip that he had a gun. He was booked into the Pulaski County jail about 4:40 p.m. Thursday on charges of possession of a handgun at school and resisting arrest.

Jail records show Felder remained in the facility Friday morning with bail not yet set.

According to a police report, the officer responding to the school had an assistant principal pull Felder out of class. But when Felder saw the officer, he "grabbed his groin area and tried to walk away," the report said.

The officer grabbed Felder's waist and felt a small handgun in the teen's pants, the report said.

"He then tried to push me away and break free," the arresting officer wrote in the report. "I pulled him to the ground and forcibly handcuffed him."

It wasn't clear what grade in school Felder attends or when his initial court appearance would occur.

Budget plan antes up for Medicaid, schools (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Arkansas' public schools and health-care programs would get most of the money, while state employees would receive a 2 percent cost-of living increase under the state budget proposal that legislative leaders unveiled Thursday night.

The lawmakers and the state's chief fiscal officer said the proposed budget largely mirrors the \$4.9 billion budget that Beebe proposed in November for fiscal 2014. The state's budget is \$4.727 billion in the fiscal year that ends June 30.

"We've tweaked it here and there, and added \$2 million for the Governor's Distinguished Scholarships [to head off cutting the number of new recipients by more than 200 in the next school year]," said Sen. Larry Teague, D-Nashville, co-chairman of the Joint Budget Committee.

"The governor always has been pretty good at budgeting," he said.

The committee distributed copies of the proposed Revenue Stabilization Act to members' desks Thursday evening to clear the way for the committee to vote on the measure today, Teague said.

It divides the projected funding into A, B and C categories: The first \$4.786 billion would go to category A; assuming there's enough money, the B category would receive the next \$131 million. If enough money still remains, \$6.65 million would go to category C.

Combined, the three categories total \$4.924 billion. Any amount above that would be surplus.

The state's revenue forecast for fiscal 2014 envisions enough money to fully fund categories A and B, said Richard Weiss, the state's chief fiscal officer.

"If the economy grows and we up the forecast, then you'd be able to finance [category C]," he said.

The budget presented Thursday deals only with general revenue (including money from sales and income taxes) as opposed to special revenue such as motor-fuel taxes, federal funds and other sources of revenue.

The budget anticipates \$10 million in tax cuts in fiscal 2014 and provides for \$18 million in rainy-day funds.

Under the proposed budget, the Public School Fund providing state aid to Arkansas' 239 school districts would increase by nearly \$47 million to \$2.046 billion. That all would be in the A category.

The Department of Human Services would get a nearly \$95 million increase to \$1.226 billion, with the state's Medicaid program getting an \$85 million increase to \$890 million. All but \$1.7 million for Behavioral Health Services would be in categories A and B.

The budget contains no Medicaid service cuts, said Weiss.

Teague said legislative leaders also plan to propose providing \$70 million in current surplus funds to the Medicaid program that Beebe requested.

The state's higher education institutions' general revenue funding would increase from by \$7 million to \$736 million with all but \$2.6 million in categories A and B. The \$2.6 million would go for uncompensated care at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

The state Department of Correction would get a \$14 million increase to \$312 million under the budget proposal. The Department of Community Correction would receive a \$7 million increase to \$76 million.

State employees who don't work at the state's higher-education institutions haven't received cost-of-living raises in fiscal 2012 and 2013 because lawmakers balked at financing the raises. Beebe also recommended providing these more than 30,000 employees a 2 percent cost-of-living raise in fiscal 2014.